

**ACADEMIC SENATE**  
of  
**THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

AS-2592a-03/FA

January 23-24, 2003

**Recommendations Related to the Task Force on  
Roles and Responsibilities of Department Chairs**

- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of the California State University (CSU) thank the task force on roles and responsibilities of department chairs for its efforts, which resulted in the document titled *Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Rewards for Department Chairs*; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate CSU recommend that campus senates review the findings and recommendations from the systemwide task force, survey reports, as well as campus-specific data provided by the task force, and facilitate campus-based discussions among administrators and chairs to resolve relevant issues enumerated in the reports; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate CSU recommend that the Chancellor's Office review the findings and recommendations of the systemwide task force survey reports and work with the California Faculty Association (CFA) and the Academic Senate CSU to develop systemwide policy as appropriate; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate CSU commend CSU Long Beach on its efforts over the past six years to host workshops for chairs and encourage the Chancellor's Office to continue to support these efforts and facilitate the participation of department chairs throughout the system; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate CSU distribute electronically the Task Force's report on *Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Rewards for Department Chairs* to relevant staff and administrators in the Chancellor's Office, campus department chairs, presidents, provosts, deans, senate chairs, and the California Faculty Association.

*RATIONALE: The task force report on Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Rewards for Department Chairs is an excellent resource for faculty and administrators to address the complex issues surrounding the roles and responsibilities of department chairs. Campus-based review of the CSU as well as campus-specific data is essential to recognize and subsequently act on issues of concern to department chairs. Their position and duties are unique and their ability to function effectively has a direct bearing on the ability of the CSU to accomplish its mission and deliver high quality education to the wide array of students looking to the CSU for extended education and/or professional preparation.*

**APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY – March 6-7, 2003**

Executive Summary  
***The California State University Department Chair Survey Report***  
 Prepared for the California State University  
 Office of the Chancellor and the Academic Senate CSU

By

Don Chu, Professor	Sally Veregge, Professor
California State University, Chico	San Jose State University

This study looked at four primary questions. Who are the California State University (CSU) Department Chairs? What are the conditions under which they work? What do they do, and how much time does it take? Lastly, why do they serve, and why don't they want to serve longer? All recipients of the CSU System department chair stipend (N=850) were sent the self-report *CSU Department Chair Survey* via campus senate offices. Four hundred and twenty five (N=425) usable surveys were returned for a response rate of 50%. The highlights of the report follow. The conclusions and summary statements below apply to the 50% of CSU department chairs who responded to the survey.

Who are the CSU department chairs?

CSU chairs are mostly home grown with 65% having been full-time faculty only on their current campuses. While the average department size that chairs manage is 6-10 FTEF, some departments are as large as small colleges. Chairs turnover at a rate of 20% per year and about half are within their first 3 years of service. With all the new deans in the CSU, about 40% of chairs serve under deans who are within their first 3 years of service. Although there is some relationship between the size of departments and length and percent of administrative appointment, there is notable inconsistency as well.

What are the conditions under which they serve?

Two-thirds of all chairs in the CSU had zero hours of formal preparation before they assumed their positions. Wide campus differences exist with 100% of chairs reporting no preparation for the job on one campus, while 71% of chairs reported that they were given formal preparation on another CSU campus. Once on the job, chairs do not have clear expectations for their performance, with only 20% reporting that their deans give them formal reviews with clear expectations. Once again, wide campus differences exist with 86% of chairs reporting the lack of clear expectations from their deans on one campus and only 18% of chairs reporting such unclear expectations on another CSU campus. Few chairs understand the policies that affect their level of appointment and performance expectations.

Clearly, decentralization of fiscal authority has not reached the department level, with only 39% of chairs reporting that they are on dollar-based budgeting, and only 25% reporting that they are permitted to reallocate money that they have saved from their personnel budgets. Forty-two percent of chairs say that they allocate department travel money (averaging \$401-\$600 for 23% of departments, and \$201-\$400 for 19% of departments), while 39% of respondents report that their dean allocates this professional development money.

What do they do, and how much time does it take?

Chairs report that 61%-80% of their days are spent on administrative duties. For the 39% of chairs who do not have 12-month appointments, 50% report that they work at least 21 days unpaid. Much of the chair's time is spent answering mail and reading and writing reports, with 91% of chairs saying that they spend 2 hours or more each day attending to departmental communication requirements. Chairs report that they spend little time engaged in boundary-spanning activities (such as grant writing and public relations) or in faculty professional development.

Why do they serve, and why don't they want to serve longer?

The bureaucratic grind of paperwork, reports and meetings seems to wear chairs down. It is the magnitude of this paperwork that is the biggest surprise to faculty members when they become chairs. These everyday chores take up so much time that the creative scholarly opportunities that may have initially attracted them to the professorate have no time to express themselves within the multi-tasking demands of the chair's

position. This is especially the case when chairs do not have the authority that promotes a sense of efficacy. Sixty-nine percent of chairs report that they have too much responsibility and too little authority. It is also clear why chairs might consider further service--when chairs feel valued and respected by their department colleagues. There also exists wide variance between campuses in the perceived level of support that chairs feel from their deans and central administration.

### Conclusions

Department management in the CSU is marked by frequent turnover of chairs, appointment of chairs who have been long-time faculty only on their current campuses, lack of preparation for the position before assuming the post, lack of clarity concerning expectations for the position, and lack of formal clear review by the dean. The decentralization of authority, budget management, and responsibility that was instituted in the CSU during the early nineties has not consistently reached the level of the department. Most departments are not on dollar-based budgeting. Most chairs do not have the authority to redistribute or rollover funds. Chairs are expected to shuffle mounds of paper and respond to a multitude of requests from all levels, the administration, faculty and students. Chairs are expected to guide their departments in the present and help plan for the future, yet often they do not have the fiscal authority to distribute resources to best support these expectations. There is little incentive to budget efficiently at the department level, even under dollar-based budgeting, if chairs are not able to move funds where they are needed to promote chair initiatives or other department priorities. Chairs not only do not have the authority to do more than “respond” to the requests of others, they do not have the time. They do not have the time to engage in the proactive, creative management that might forward their departments. Finally, chairs clearly miss the primary social-psychic reinforcements that drew them to the CSU—teaching and scholarship. In its current form, the role of chair does not permit chairs the creativity and resources necessary to engender a sense of efficacy. They might consider continuation in the role of chair if they are appreciated and respected by their colleagues and administration, or if the compensation for chairing were significantly greater.

## Report of the Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities of Department Chairs

### Executive Summary

The objective of this report is to make recommendations that will “enhance roles, rewards and resources” for Department Chairs. The goal is to improve training, recruitment, and retention of chairs with the end of making them more enduring and effective leaders of their departments. The data and observations that form the basis for the recommendations that follow come in large part from the California State University Department Chair Survey. The report also draws from job descriptions and practices of individual campuses, the contract between the CSU and the CFA, personal observations, and the academic literature.

The Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities of Chairs recommends that:

- 1) each campus establish a committee on the “status of chairs” to develop an action plan to address the findings of the CSU Chair Survey and home campus surveys and the recommendations of the Task Force. The Task Force recommends that this committee report annually on its progress to the campus senate and representatives designated by the Statewide Senate.
- 2) the Academic Senate CSU, chancellor’s office, campus presidents, and academic vice presidents discuss and address the findings of the CSU Department Chair Survey and home campus surveys and the recommendations of the Task Force.

Further, the Task Force makes the following additional observations and recommendations:

Campuses need to give chairs the resources they require to be effective leaders.

- **Campuses should give chairs more authority/control over financial and other departmental resources.** Chairs should have dollar-based budgets, should be able to roll funds forward from year to year, and should be able to use saved dollars to best benefit their departments.
- **Campuses and the CSU should provide chairs with more training prior to and after they assume the role of chair.** Campuses should also provide chairs with more opportunities, resources, and time to attend campus, CSU-supported, and other professional development workshops.
- **Campuses should give chairs more access to the information required to effectively run their departments, including FTES targets and budgetary information.** The university administration should keep chairs in the same information loop as the deans.

Campuses and the CSU should treat chairs equitably regarding their conditions of appointment.

- **Campuses should give all chairs the option of 12-month appointments or establish a mechanism for compensating chairs for unpaid days worked.<sup>b</sup>**
  - **Campuses should establish an advisory committee to review the means used to determine the percent of administrative appointment and the length of the chair's contract to:**
    - ✓ Establish a formula or procedure that best represents the current workload of chairs
      - ✓ Achieve equity among chairs on a single campus and ultimately promote equity across the CSU<sup>b</sup>
- At a minimum the formula should take into account total FTEF (including part-time faculty and teaching associates), FTES, number of majors, and number of staff.
- **Campuses should provide chairs with job descriptions and other details of their duties so they are fully informed of what is expected of them before they assume their roles.**
    - **Campuses should have reasonable expectations of chairs given the amount of time and resources available to them.**
  - **Campuses should review the tasks that chairs are expected to perform to assure that they are appropriate and manageable within the constraints of the chair's administrative appointment.**
    - **Campuses should evaluate and reward chairs based on their job descriptions.** Campuses should evaluate chairs annually based on clear performance objectives and reward chairs based on their job descriptions, not on the traditional criteria for performance evaluation of faculty.

The compensation for chairs should match the demands of the position.

- **The CSU and CFA should review the appropriateness of current levels of compensation for 12-month and academic year chairs and bargain compensation that rewards chairs according to their true administrative workload.<sup>b</sup>**

Too much of the chair's time is squandered on routine administrative functions (the "bureaucratic grind"). Campuses should provide chairs with time to undertake creative management or other significant creative activities.

- **A campus committee should analyze the workload of chairs and make recommendations to reduce or redistribute it to allow chairs more time for creative activity.** Recommendations should be shared among campuses within the CSU.<sup>b</sup>
  - **Campuses should reroute or reduce the bureaucratic paperwork.**

- **Campuses and the CSU should provide chairs with assigned time to allow chairs to undertake creative management or other creative activities that would benefit their departments.**
- **Campuses should consider diverting some of the routine workload of chairs to clerical personnel.**

Communication among chairs should be facilitated.

- **Local campus chairs across colleges should meet at least semi-annually.**
- **CSU chairs within disciplines should meet at least annually.**
- **The CSU should sponsor an annual conference for chairs.**  
Through this conference, the CSU can provide a forum for chairs to communicate with one another about what they do and how they do it. Time can be provided for meetings among chairs within disciplines and for sessions that deal with issues that chairs would like to address.
- **CSU department chairs should consider establishing a list-serve of all CSU chairs or CSU chairs within disciplines**

Other recommendations

- **The Academic Senate CSU, or the office of the chancellor of the CSU, should conduct a survey of CSU deans, similar to the Chair Survey, which includes questions about how deans manage chairs and what deans think are best practices for chairs.**
- **Campuses should educate faculty about the roles and responsibilities of contemporary chairs, both to recruit qualified faculty into the position and to enhance understanding of what chairs do.**